

Adolescents Socioeconomic Status, Socialization and Academic performance of Two Secondary Schools in the Education District of East Trinidad and Tobago

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Abstract: *The paper investigated adolescents' socioeconomic status and academic performance at two secondary schools in the Education District of East Trinidad and Tobago. A stratified random sample was generated from random samples of two Mixed Government secondary schools in East Trinidad and Tobago. Descriptive statistics methods were used for the analysis of data. The data analysis of socioeconomic status revealed that lower-class students were performing better than middle-class students. The findings of the paper contradict the predictive nature of socioeconomic status and academic performance. Socioeconomic status has been shown to override other educational influences.*

Keywords: Adolescents; socioeconomic status; academic performance

1. Introduction

The paper begins by stating that although considerable efforts have been made to improve students' academic performance and retention, the Education system in Trinidad and Tobago by its very structural nature continues to foster inequality in academic performance. Some of these structures include streaming and tracking. Students from the Upper, middle, and lower status groups are socialized into this system. Since these students are not socialized into the system the same way a variation in academic performance results that has its genesis in the inequality of the system. And it has been argued that this results in some students performing well while others have problems in performing. According to evidence by Battle and Lewis (2002), who posited that a person's education is closely linked to his/her life chance, income, and wellbeing.

Research indicates that children from low-socioeconomic status households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from higher socioeconomic status groups (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, and Maczuga 2009). If students enter kindergarten at a disadvantage, early gaps in understanding of literacy or mathematics tend to be sustained or widened over time (Aunola et al. 2004; Linder, Ramey, and Zambar 2013). According to Tucker (2010), what parents can do with their children at home has far greater significance than any other factor open to educational influence. Similarly, Wood and Attfield(2005) argued that early years were particularly important for developing children's ability and enthusiasm in mathematics and this been supported by educational and developmental psychologists such as Erickson(1982), Piaget(1983), as well as Bandura's social learning theory(1965) among others. In Trinidad and Tobago, Mathematics and English Language are considered to be the two main prerequisite subjects that are common to all

schools and all students from various ethnic backgrounds; and as such will be the basis of comparison in this paper.

2. Background to the study

The type of secondary school students attend has a significant part to play in their academic performance. London (1994) and Jackson (2010) found that attending a better school has large positive effects on examination performance at the end of secondary school. The process is a socializing one, in which the home is the primary socializing agent where the desire for education is internalized while the school, according to Parsons (1951) is the secondary socializing agent where the students fulfilled that internalized desire with the help of the family and teachers.

Table 1 shows a CXC Mathematics grade distribution of the schools in the study while Table 2 shows a CXC English grade distribution. CSEC Mathematics and English Language are subjects, in which all secondary schools' students must pass to secure a place in the A-level class.

Table 1: Variations in CXC math grades from schools A and B 2011

School	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
School A	NIL	0	3	14	9	41	6	27	4	18	22	100
School B	15	50	9	30	4	13	2	Nil	Nil	0	30	100

Source: Caribbean Examinations Council (2011)

Table 2: Variations in CXC English grades from school A and B 2011

School	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
School A	5	23	9	41	7	32	1	4	NIL	0	22	100
School B	21	70	8	27	1	3	NIL	0	NIL	0	30	100

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Source: Caribbean Examinations Council (2011)

3. Literature Review

Socioeconomic status (SES)

Socioeconomic status (SES) is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual and when viewed through a social class lens, privilege, wealth, power, and control are emphasized (Tumin 1953; Davis et al. 1945). Furthermore, an examination of SES as a gradient or continuous variable reveals inequality in the access to and distribution of resources. A family's socioeconomic status is based on the family's income level, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community (e.g., contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's perception of the family) (Jeynes 2002; Korir and Kipkemboi 2014).

The segregating nature of the social class, ethnicity, and race may well reduce the variety of enriching experiences thought to be a prerequisite for creating readiness to learn among children. Social class, ethnicity, and race entail a set of 'contextual givens' that dictate neighbourhood, housing, and access to resources that affect enrichment or deprivation as well as the acquisition of specific systems (Crnic and Lamberty 1994).

In Trinidad and Tobago Osuji (1987) found that socioeconomic status and the school had an impact on Form Five students' educational achievement. She also found that these two independent variables when combined with any of the other variables in her study always remained statistically significant while the other variables' combinations were not statistically significant. Socio-economic status has also been shown to override other educational influences such as parental involvement (McNeal 2001; Makewa et al. 2012).

It is believed that low socio-economic status negatively affects academic performance because low socio-economic status prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home (Eamon 2005; Majoribanks 1996; Jeynes 2002) as well as having less-educated parents, therefore, less help at home and less encouragement in educational pursuits. Children from low-socioeconomic status households are about twice as likely as those from higher socioeconomic status households to display learning-related behavioural problems.

Dyer (1967) examined the effects of the educational environment in the home on the school achievement of pupils in Trinidad primary schools. Using the Index of Educational Environment (IEE) he revealed that behaviour can be controlled by their particular culture. Dyer (1967) therefore concluded that it is not so much what the parent has as to what he does with and for the child that has a greater influence on the child's school performance. Dyer's study was appropriate at the time it was done but since then Trinidad and Tobago have made tremendous social and economic changes.

Camejo (1971) argued that education in Trinidad and

Tobago was not a good social determinant for the social class since more emphasis at the time was placed on alternative socio-economic determinants like agriculture. In Trinidad and Tobago, the status and prestige afforded to education only became prominent after Independence when the greater emphasis was placed on the relationship between economic development and education.

According to Haviland (2002), modernization is an all-encompassing global process of cultural and socio-economic changes, whereby the developing societies seek to acquire some of the characteristics common to industrial societies. Due to modern technology, modernization creates a change in traditions and values.

Academic performance

According to Wikipedia (2020), the free encyclopaedia, academic performance is defined as the: Extend to which a student, teacher, or institution has achieved their educational goals. Academic performance is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested.

According to De Lisle (2010) for proper student academic performance to take place in Trinidad and Tobago, target setting must be realistic and must be built upon meaningful and valid performance indicators. Research has shown that strategies for measuring academic performance in Trinidad and Tobago are at their infancy stage of development.

Quantitative methodology

The methodology for this paper presents the hypothesis of the study, development of the instrument, sample size, and the statistical analysis of the data obtained. The hypothesis is developed by a combination of the objective of this paper and the literature review on the rationale behind the main assumption of the research. The null hypothesis is therefore presented: **There is no significant relationship, at the .05 alpha level between Adolescents Socioeconomic Status and their Academic Performance.** Since socioeconomic status, cannot be precisely measured, operationalization is used to indirectly measure it. Socioeconomic status is the social standing or class of an individual in society and includes the individual's wealth and prestige.

The study's population

The study's population comprised of two Mixed Government secondary schools in St George East Education district. A stratified random sample was generated using the random samples of the two Mixed Government Secondary schools in the St George East education district keeping in mind the nature of the hypothesis and objective of the paper. The schools selected from the St George East education district were two Mixed Government secondary schools.

The schools are as followed:

- A. Government Secondary: Mixed School. Barataria.
- B. Government Secondary: Mixed School. San Juan.

The total population of students from the two Mixed Government secondary schools' students was 104. The researcher generated a stratified random sample size of 52 respondents. The two random samples comprised of the

following; School A. 22, and School B. 30. The final sample was 52 responses from which 45 were reliable to be used and 7 were absent.

Table 3: Size of the population, sample selection and response rate in each school (number of students)

School	Total population	Sample size	Response	Non-response
A	45	22	22	0
B	59	30	23	7
Total	104	52	45	7

Selection of data analysis

Descriptive statistical methods were applied in the collection and analysis of the paper’s data. Independent Samples T-Test was used to test the hypothesis to compare the means of two independent samples middle class and lower class.

4. Data Analysis

Table 4: School A: descriptive statistics of the dependent variable

Variable	N	Mean	Std deviation
Social Class	22	1.363	0.3549

School A independent sample T-test: socioeconomic status (SES)

H₀ - There is no relationship between Adolescents socioeconomic status (SES) and students’ academic performance.

H₁ - There is a relationship between Adolescents socioeconomic status (SES) and students’ academic performance.

Middle class and lower class.

Table 5: School A’s summary of the independent sample T-test results for the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance

S.E.S.	Frequency	Mean	Std Deviation	T	Df	Sig
Middle class	13	1.96	0.138	1.39	11.4	0.189
Lower class	9	1.83	0.250			

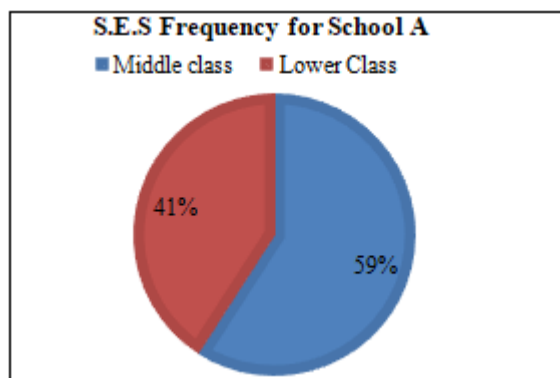


Figure 1: S.E.S Frequency for School A

Table 5. Only Middle-class and Lower-class students attended School A. The researcher collected data for Middle-class and Lower-class. Results indicated a difference in the mean scores; Middle-class was 1(M = 1.96, SD = .139), while the mean score given to Lower-class was 1(M = 1.83, SD = .250) (See Table 5). The independent group's T-Test indicated that the difference between these two means was not statistically significant $t(11.4) = 1.39, p > .05$. These results indicated that **the null hypothesis should be**

retained, and one should conclude that the academic performance of Middle-class students may be due to chance.

Table 6: School B. descriptive statistics of the dependent variable

Variable	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Social Class	23	1.507	0.4003

School B independent sample T-test: socioeconomic status

H₀: There is no relationship between Adolescents socioeconomic status and academic performance.

H₁: There is a relationship between Adolescents socioeconomic status and academic performance. Middle class and lower class.

Table 7: School B. summary of the independent sample T-test results for the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance

S.E.S.	Frequency	Mean	Std deviation	T	Df	Sig
Middle class	17	1.82	.246	-2.95	16	.009
Lower class	6	2.00	.000			

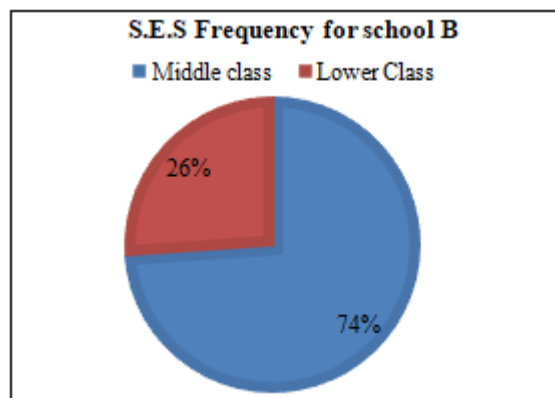


Figure 2: S.E.S Frequency for School B

Table 7 shows results that indicated a difference in the mean Middle-class score 1(M = 1.824, SD = .246) while mean score for Lower-class was 2(M = 2.00, SD = .000). An independent groups’ T-test indicated that the difference between these two means was statistically significant $t(16) = -2.954, p < .05$. These results indicate that **the null hypothesis should be rejected** and that one should conclude that Lower-class students are performing much better than Middle-class students.

5. Discussion

There is no relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and students’ academic performance. The socioeconomic status data for School A revealed that only Middle-class and Lower-class students attended School A. Out of the twenty-two (22) students, thirteen (13) were Middle-class (mean -1.92) while nine (9) were Lower-class (1.83). The difference of the two means in the Independent Sample T-Test (p-value = alpha .05) resulted in the academic performance of Middle-class and Lower-class not significant.

The academic performance of Middle-class students and Lower-class students was the same.

Socioeconomic status data for School B also revealed the presence of Middle-class and Lower-class students. At School B, seventeen (17) students were Middle-class (mean -1.82) while six (6) were Lower-class (mean- 2.00). The results of the Independent Sample T-Test (p value= α .05) revealed that the academic performance between Middle-class and Lower-class students was significant. Lower-class students were performing better than Middle-class students.

6. Conclusion

The paper revealed that the phenomenon of Lower-class students performing better than Middle-class students contradicts the predictive nature of socioeconomic status and academic performance. Socioeconomic status has been shown to override other educational influences such as parental involvement (McNeal 2001; Makew et al. 2012).

The findings of the study also contradict Bernstein Linguistic Code theory, Bourdieu's Cultural theory, and Osuji (1987). Bourdieu (1977) highlighted that the possession of cultural capital varies with social class. This makes it very difficult for Lower-class students to succeed in the education system. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), cultural capital can be intergenerational.

Chin and Phillips (2004) see it as a form of social reproduction. Bernstein (1975) examined the socialization of different social classes' use of the English language. According to Bernstein (1975) due to the class structure in society, family local pedagogic discourses and practices may correspond either to a restricted orientation or to an elaborated orientation depending on the family's position in the social division of labour.

The findings also contradict studies conducted by Alexander et al. (2001); Battin-Pearson et al. (2000); Rumberger (2004); Schargel (2004). They all particularly indicated that as low socio-economic status children get older their situation tends to worsen. Studies that corroborated the findings of the study include Musgrave (1972) who argued that not all Middle-class parents have attitudes entirely favourable towards their children's education, but it seems that fewer parents, of Lower social class, have attitudes favourable in this respect. Also, Considine and Zappala (2002) corroboration with this study found that the effect of parental socioeconomic status on children's educational outcomes may be neutralized, strengthened, or mediated by a range of other contextual, family, and individual characteristics. They further argued that parents may have a low-income and a low-status occupation but can transmit high educational aspirations to their children. What family members have (material resources) can often be mediated by what family members do (parental support and family cohesion) (Dyer 1967; Considine and Zappala 2002).

Finally, the finding also corroborated with Tenebaum et al. (2007) who stated that Lower-class students, whose parents encouraged individual decision-making in their children during early adolescence, were more likely to graduate from high school and attend university. Yet still, overall, it is believed that parents' socioeconomic status may perhaps be

the main source of influence that determined a child's academic performance.

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